

LEADERSHIP STYLE AND TEAM MANAGEMENT PSYCHOLOGY: A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

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Abstract

Leadership in modern-day organisations does not just require good managerial competence to keep the team cohesion and harmony alive with the objective of achieving the team's objective, but also involves a certain understanding of the psychological and emotional needs of the team members to make the team morale high. Understanding the psyche of the team members is crucial for the leader, not just to connect with the team but also to make the team members feel that they are vital stakeholders in achieving the team's targets and thereby provide the team with the necessary resilience in every phase of the team's work. The study "Leadership Style and Team Management Psychology: A Critical Appraisal" examines the myriad roles that a leader performs for his team, but focuses on exploring how the leader's understanding of the psyche of his team members is an essential part of the process and can be vital in determining the team's performance.

Keywords: Emotional Health, Leadership, Performance, Resilience, Team, Team Morale

INTRODUCTION

A company's or a team's success mostly depends on the quality and execution of its leadership, as leaders are not just managers who manage the daily affairs and working of the team, but are the driving force behind any team's morale and motivation, which is necessary for its peak performance. Scholars are divided in their opinions on the efficacy of various leadership approaches, as people feel that different approaches serve different functions in motivating team members and keeping the team in a harmonious relationship. A consensus-based framework is necessary, as per the study of Toney (1996), to understand the psychology of team management, and leaders must be very careful to understand their team members' psychology and to use means that positively affect team members' psyche to attain the team's objectives. Since no single tactic can fit every situation, adaptability is essential for an effective leader who wants to make a mark and make his team or organisation not just sail through, but to achieve great feats. An effective leader needs to understand their team's psyche better to determine how much to communicate and when, so the team works optimally and delivers maximum output.

Evaluating Team Performance

Evaluating the team's performance is crucial to grasping how team leadership works. In other words, a team is as good as its leader, as the leader's vision and mission find expression in the way the team works. The present study examines how leadership influences team performance in terms of affecting the psyche of the team members. During the transition and action phases, teams face various obstacles stemming from their external context (Morgeson, 2010), and here the leaders have to show their roles in keeping the team together and finding the right cohesion in the team by understanding the pros and cons of each team member and utilising their competence to the utmost fashion. The team's efficiency and output could suffer if the leaders are not able to think ahead and anticipate the obstacles they may come across. Problem-solving is an art that leaders are usually very good at, but great leaders are those who can foresee the problems and are ready with their solutions before they creep up. A good leadership approach accommodates the requirements of all team members across various iterations in such a manner that the team members connect with the leader and, moreover, with each other.

Psyche of Functional Leadership

A team leader needs to work on the requirements of every team member, and "functional leadership" describes this management approach (Morgeson, 2010), where leaders are aware of why and how a team member will remain motivated and work on that aspect instead of micromanaging every step of the work. Understanding the psyche of the team members, therefore, is essential as that can lead the leader to find the right approach to understand his team. The best leaders usually survey their teams regularly, identify the tasks that are challenging for the team and implement policies and boost the morale of the team members to make those tasks achievable. Although the focus is typically on team members, functional leadership consciously remains open-ended in terms of how and who can fulfil the team's requirements (Mendes, 2017).

Sometimes, the leader can be internal to the team who work with the team and keep the team motivated at each instant by being a role model to the team working. Such internal leaders usually are the ones who team members can emulate, and thereby they can be a source of motivation for the team and keep the team morale high. But a leader can also be external to the team's day-to-day operations (Carter et al., 2020) who does not participate in the working of the team but is there only to keep the team morale high and to make the team accomplish the given task. Such leaders do not operate in terms of providing the team with instances of teamwork by example but motivate the team through their communication when they are aware of the psychological parameters of the team

members. Usually, external leaders, those outside the team, are formally appointed to provide the drive for the team to succeed. They just influence the team's working. Then, there can be unofficial leaders in a team – these leaders are not formally appointed, but they become leaders by being the most trustworthy and competent individuals within the team, and they are the ones to whom all other team members rely for accomplishing the team objective. These leaders who organically come up within a team without being a formal designation are the ones who understand the psyche of each team member very well and understand how and why a team member can do what he needs to do, and where he might falter, and where he needs support. They are informal leaders and serve the team members' needs at the most critical moments of the team tasks and therefore win everyone's trust. They are often seen as genuine leaders who do not intend to lead but become leaders organically because they have those leadership qualities.

Leadership can be acquired

But is it also a fact that leadership qualities can be improved with great attention and accuracy by inculcating the right spirit. Some may be born leaders, but most develop leadership qualities by cultivating the traits that make a leader. According to Walumbwa et al. (2008), there are four main features of genuine leadership: self-awareness, internalised moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. These traits in a person will allow them to be a genuine leader if they are ingrained in their ideas, behaviours, and deeds. Genuine leaders can inspire the team members because of their unique perspectives and firm belief in the validity of their ideas (Shamir & Eilam, 2005), and they know where to put in effort, which would bring the best results. These kinds of leaders are always keen to accommodate the team's wants and needs and are careful to understand that the needs of the team members are to be fulfilled and the team will attain its objective.

Transitional Phase – Team-making Psychology

In the transitional phase of a team makeup, the team members evaluate the group's overall performance competence and usually concentrate on tasks that can improve overall team production (Heinemann & Zeiss, 2012). A leader's responsibilities at this time of change include taking stock of the group's make-up, outlining objectives, organising and conducting training, bolstering performance, and offering constructive criticism (Bryman et al., 2011). To ensure continued success, leaders implement essential and evaluative measures, and these measures too can be organically developed when the leader is genuine instead of being forced on the team members.

Taking stock of the team's makeup is a crucial leadership task throughout the adjusting phase. Selecting the team that will carry out the organisation's goals is vital to this leadership role. Moreover, picking a team is crucial as the unit develops and the environment shifts over time (Rouco, 2015). Interpersonal processes like collaboration, communication, team cohesion, and information flow throughout the organisation can also be affected by the team's behaviour and performance (Heinemann & Zeiss, 2012). Leaders can make effective personnel decisions by considering candidates' talents, expertise, and relevant work experience and psychological and emotional resilience, which is necessary for team morale.

Leadership Psychology in Transition Phase

Second, during transition, establishing expectations and goals facilitates participation in shaping the team's future, where the leaders need to establish objectives and orient the team based on team members' current standing and previous successes (Heinemann & Zeiss, 2012). Improving the team's credibility by adopting necessary and effective training programs is another crucial leadership function during the transition phase (Kraiger et al., 2020). Leaders can reduce inadequacy by organising their teams' coaching, training, and facilitation events. Thus, additional team members may benefit from training and coaching activities and become better prepared (Schoppek et al., 2018). Mentorship programs can boost the team's efficiency by equipping team members with the necessary expertise, and it is essential that the leaders, through their social skills, figure out the intensity and learning desire of the team members so that accordingly the leaders can fix responsibilities for the team.

Significance of Feedback

Feedback from team members is also a critical leadership duty (Schoppek et al., 2018), as that is necessary for the organisation's upkeep, development, and operation from the team's point of view, as well as for the team to achieve that cohesion and upbeat morale. Formal feedback mechanisms are necessary and are always helpful, but a genuine leader would not wait for the formal feedback mechanism to be in place but will informally keep on taking feedback and will implement changes in the team working, which would make the team members feel that they are vital stakeholders in team making and performance.

Team Boundary Management

Furthermore, team boundary management is an essential leadership responsibility where it is necessary to regulate communication between the team's leaders and decision-making subordinates (Morgenson, 2010). Regardless of rank or position, all team members are expected to contribute to and manage all team activities (Schoppek et al., 2018) and when this is done within the prescribed format and formality of the organizational setup, it brings positive outcomes; but the informality and fluidity of these boundaries and democratization of the processes can often work wonders when the team leaders know how to use them effectively. Effective boundary management safeguards the team's rights and interests, thereby boosting overall productivity, though the boundaries, instead of being fixed, should be made fluid to make the team work cohesively.

Action Phase Leadership Psychology

During the action phase, a team is focused on achieving the aims with which the team was conceptualised, and thereby the leader plays the critical roles of coordinating the team's interactions and facilitating constant feedback from/to team members to make the involvement of the team in the given task the priority. To curate peak performance and continuous improvement, the leader must keep a close eye on the team's progress but not get into micromanaging every step. In this role, the leader analyses data on the team's output and internal and external processes (Rehmani et al., 2018) so that he can keep the team updated on the progress of the task to be accomplished. But what is also important is that he keeps a tab on the team members and their emotional health so that they are at the peak of their motivation to achieve the team objective within the given timeframe. The leader is, thus, responsible for assessing the team's performance, taking time constraints into account (Mendes, 2017), but also for the mental health of the team members. The team's success depends heavily on the effectiveness of their monitoring that the leader undertakes. The leader probes for details about team members assigned tasks, elucidates the team's approach, and supports them through difficulties and challenges (Carter et al., 2020), which also includes personal challenges.

Rallying Support for the Team

This leadership role encompasses a wide range of tasks and responsibilities, which also includes advocating for the team to rally support from outside the team and shield the team from any outside intervention (Ryan, 2012). Leadership calls for driving team members toward accomplishing objectives and peak performance, but also for probing for more effective ways to handle work by questioning existing assumptions, procedures, and approaches. This style of leadership gives people the freedom to seize opportunities actively (Ryan, 2012) and to find innovative ways to handle the cohesion of the team. Sometimes, the team may have to deal with a complexity for which no clear-cut remedy exists (Rouco, 2015), and here the leader's role is to find innovative solutions. Solutions like this help groups amass the tools they need to complete their work (Ryan, 2012). Team leaders also need to mediate disputes when they arise and negotiate with the conflicting parties, both within and outside the team, to find ways of finding the balance that does not affect the team's performance. Thus, the leader mediates between team members or takes part in or carries out some of the team's tasks (Bryman et al., 2011). The internal leaders who are responsible for a specific portion of the team's work often consistently pitch in to aid other team members (Rouco, 2015). Assisting team members is a leader's primary job, and this can be done not just by giving them the means through which they can successfully complete the job, but also by working on the morale of the team members.

CONCLUSION: PSYCHOLOGY OF FINDING EQUILIBRIUM FOR THE TEAM

Thus, leadership is about finding that equilibrium for the team, which can make the team find the attainment of the objective not too challenging, and in this job, the genuine leader is one who can make his team sail through all the challenges by innovative solutions to problems and by being democratic in listening to team members' views and taking constant feedback to adapt and adopt strategies to accomplish tasks but more importantly to keep the team in harmony and keep the team morale and emotional health of the team spirited. The managerial aspects of leadership are an overworked area of research, but the way in which a genuine leader supports the team members through thick and thin and provides a psychological boost to achieve greatness in each member needs to be explored in greater depth in today's time, when team performance primarily depends on the emotional health and mental resilience of the team members.

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